I see a strange confession in thine eye:
Thou shak'st thy head; and hold'st it fear, or sin [4],
To speak a truth- If he be slain, say so [5]:
The tongue offends not, that reports his death:
And he doth sin, that doth belie the dead:
Not he, which says the dead is not alive.
Yet the first bringer of unwelcome news
Hath but a losing office: and his tongue
Sounds ever after as a sullen- bell.
Remembered knolling * a departing friend [6].

* Quartos, *tolling,*

[44] And he doth sin, that doth belie the dead;
[41] Not he, which says the dead is not alive.
" *Mor.* Yet the first bringer of unwelcome news
[e]* Hath but a losing office ; and his tongue
** Sounds ever after as a sullen bell,
[c] Remember'd knolling a departing friend."
Here is a natural interposition of Bardolph at the beginning*, who is not pleased to hear his news confuted, and a proper preparation of Morton for the tale which he is unwilling to tell.
JOHNSON.

4 — hold'st it FEAR, or sin,] *Fear,* for *danger.*
WARBURTON.

5 — If he be slain, say so :] The words *say so* are in the first folio, but not in the quarto: they are necessary to the verse, but the sense proceeds as well without them,
JOHNSON.

[6] Sounds ever after as a SULLEN bell,
Remember'd knolling a DEPARTING friend.]
So, in our author's 71st Sonnet:

«----*you shall hear the surly *sullen* bell
" Give warning to the world that *I amjled"*
This significant epithet has been adopted by Milton :
** I hear the far-off curfew sound,
" Over some wide water'd shore
** Swinging slow with *sullen* roar."
Departing, I believe, is here used for *departed,*
MALONE.

I cannot concur in this supposition. The *lett,* anciently, was rung before expiration, and thence was called the *passing lell,* i. e. the bell that solicited prayers *for tliQ soul passing* into another world.
STEEVENS.

I am inclined to think that this bell might have been originally used to drive away demons who were watching to take possession of the soul of the deceased. In the cuts to some of the old service books which contain the Vigilise mortuorum, several devils are waiting for this purpose in the chamber of a dying man, to whom the priest is administering extreme unction.
DOUCE.